

7 June 1977

SAC PROGRAM UNDER U-2

Guide to Handling Press Queries Resulting from Initial Air Force Announcement

1. **QUESTION:** When did the Air Force first interest itself in the U-2?

ANSWER : In early 1956 the first prototype was developed by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation and in mid-1956 USAF expressed definite interest in Lockheed's development. Initially the USAF procured three aircraft and later contracted for a limited number of additional aircraft. No large procurement order is contemplated because of the limited use to which this craft can be put.

2. **QUESTION:** Has the basic design changed since the first U-2 and its initial use by HQAF?

ANSWER : The basic design of the aircraft has remained a conventional straight wing design powered by a single Pratt & Whitney J-57 turbo jet engine. It has a light wing loading and is capable of flight at altitudes between 50,000 and 55,000 feet. As previously announced, speed was intentionally sacrificed to a subsonic maximum (under 0.75) to eliminate design and construction problems. Though no changes have been made in aircraft design a number of improvements have been made in the data collection equipment being utilized.

3. **QUESTION:** What is the specific use contemplated for the U-2?

ANSWER : The U-2 aircraft has already proved to be highly satisfactory and more economical than tactical aircraft in the context of high altitude weather research. With the improved weather instrumentation the Air Force contemplates continuing the present HQAF upper atmosphere research program but on a larger scale basis. It is the intention of the USAF to ignore wherever possible the service available to tactical military units that employ jet aircraft and require accurate information concerning weather conditions at high altitudes.

USAF review(s) completed.

1. **QUESTION:** How many U-2 aircraft does the Air Force have and where are they located?

ANSWER : USAF is initially equipping only one squadron with a possibility that an additional squadron will be activated at a later date as the program progresses. The initial squadron is located at Laughlin Air Force Base, Del Rio, Texas.

2. **QUESTION:** What type of aircraft is the U-2?

ANSWER : It is not a tactical airplane as its title notes U for utility. It is basically a research airplane of relatively low speed and limited maneuverability therefore its usefulness is limited to such programs as weather reconnaissance and research studies.

3. **QUESTION:** Is the U-2 to be deployed abroad?

ANSWER : The USAF contemplates following a research program similar to that conducted by NACA and will in all probability expand from its current location to points abroad.

4. **QUESTION:** Will the Air Force program replace the NACA program?

ANSWER : Though closely related the NACA program was originally scheduled for a period of short duration for the sole purpose of initially exploring the phenomena of the upper atmosphere. The USAF program will continue in the same areas of research with no set completion date. In other words, it is contemplated for long term duration.

5. **QUESTION:** Will the Air Force get the current NACA U-2 aircraft?

ANSWER : This decision has not been reached as NACA may find other uses to which their aircraft can be made available. No decision will be made until the completion of their program.

6. **QUESTION:** Why is the public not permitted to inspect the U-2?

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Approved For Release 2003/09/29 : CIA-RDP33-02415A000200230014-8

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ANSWER: QUESTION 11: Is the U-2 aircraft being employed in any other programs or for any other purposes?

ANSWER: The U-2 is being employed in a research program that is being conducted by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in conjunction with the AFSC at Edwards Air Force Base. In this program the aircraft is serving as a test bed to permit the flight testing of aircraft components, instrumentation, and adaptations at high altitudes. This is the purpose for which the aircraft was originally developed by Lockheed. Valuable experience is being gained with such adaptations as the fuel control on the J-57/P-3 engine and the autopilot.